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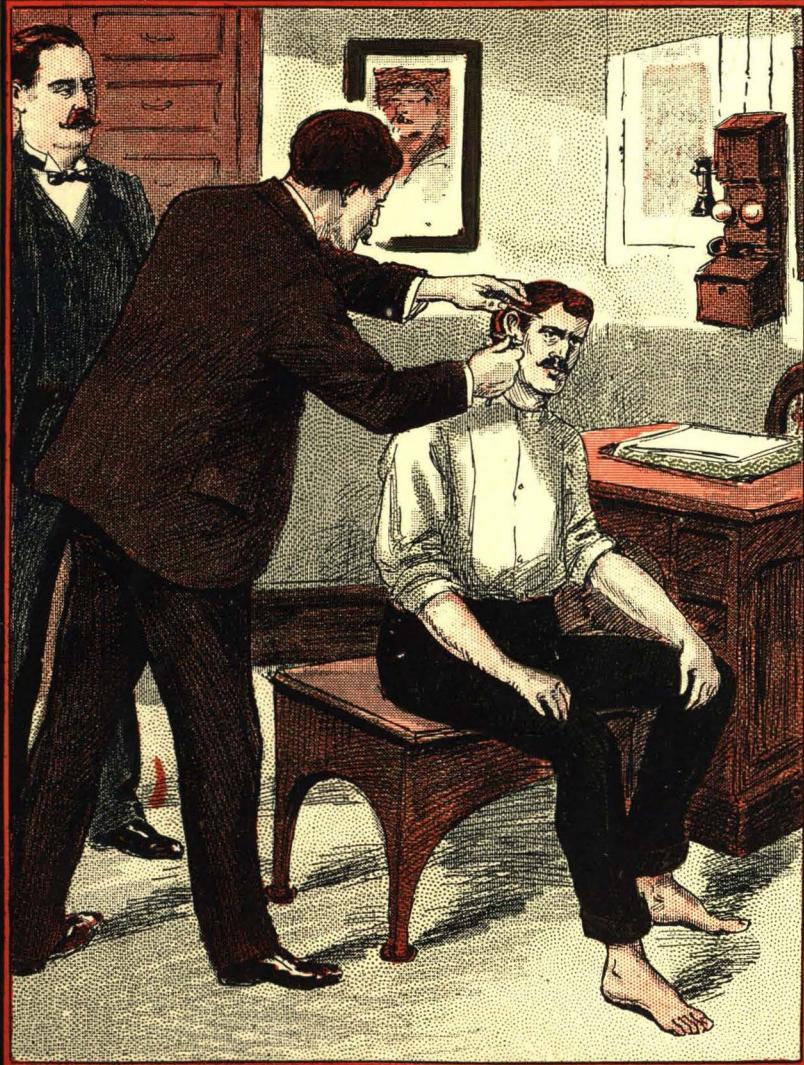
Price, Five Cents.

SHIELD WEEKLY

TRUE DETECTIVE STORIES • STRANGER THAN FICTION



CORNERED BY INCHES or A Curious Robbery in High Life BY ALDEN F. BRADSHAW



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SHIELD WEEKLY

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No. 4.

NEW YORK, December 29, 1900.

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CHIEF INSPECTOR WATTS.

The head of the detective force of the city of Boston. He figures prominently in the SHIELD WEEKLY stories, and is well known throughout New England as one of the ablest and most efficient police officials in the United States.

CORNERED BY INCHES;

OR,

A CURIOUS ROBBERY IN HIGH LIFE.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

CHAPTER I.

A CURIOUS ROBBERY.

It was snowing outside.

The feathery flakes were falling rapidly and abnormally large, covering the towering walls of the imposing new Court House in Pemberton Square, and half-hiding, as with a chaste veil, the grim face of the brick Headquarters building and the Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

Pedestrian, cabman, outdoor humanity of every degree and station, even the snowflakes themselves, seemed to be in a hurry that stormy December morning.

But none more so than the vehicle that entered and crossed Pemberton Square from the direction of aristocratic Beacon Street, and approached the Headquarters building as if about to drive through its very doors.

It was checked just short of this exploit, however. It was a very stylish coupé, with a dainty crimson and gilt monogram adorning its polished panels, and was drawn by a fine Kentucky thoroughbred, black as night. With half an eye one could see that this was a private equipage, and the owner one of that gentry whose blood is the bluest of the blue.

The cabman was in bottle-green livery under a tan mackintosh storm-coat, and he sprang down to open the carriage door; but his alacrity even did not fully satisfy the impatience of the occupant, who almost at the same moment gained the snowy sidewalk.

"Wait for me, Joseph!" he commanded, in a nervous voice.

He was a tall, rather slight, but distinguished-looking man of nearly fifty, wearing a seal coat and cap, and his thin, delicate features were quite pale.

He stood doubtful for a moment. Evidently his mission was new to him, and this advent into the realm of the police wholly distasteful, as if his delicate senses already detected with aversion, as it were, a spirit of vice and force on the frosty air.

Then he caught sight of a sign which relieved him of his momentary anxiety—Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

"Wait for me, Joseph!" he repeated; then nervously hastened down the stairs, making his way into the office of the Inspectors of Police.

Garratt was at the desk in the clerks' office.

"I want to find the manager here, or the head man, whatever he may be termed," said the stranger; and he flicked from his shoulders the few flakes which had gathered there, much as if he had regarded them decidedly presumptuous in having fallen upon him at all.

"Chief Inspector Watts, do you mean?" growled Garratt, with a sharp scrutiny of the visitor's anxious face.

For neither dress, *distingué*, nor the polish of culture, even, serves to divert the suspicious interest which these servants of the law entertain for strangers.

"I think so, sir; I do not know his name," was the quick response. "But I would like to see him at once!"

Garratt glanced toward the corridor mak-

ing round to the inner office, and said rather sharply:

"Step round that way, sir. You'll find him in his office. The room marked 'Chief Inspector' on the glass panel of the door."

"Thank you! thank you!"

The stranger hastened through the corridor in the direction indicated and approached the office mentioned, the door of which chanced to be open. At the desk nearly in the middle of the room sat a portly man of light complexion, with a forceful but pleasing face, and with curiously calm, yet penetrating, blue eyes.

This was Chief Inspector William B. Watts, of the detective force.

And Mr. Francis Grosman, aristocrat of Commonwealth Avenue, played in remarkably good luck when he found Chief Inspector Watts at leisure that morning, for there is no busier man within the city limits.

The chief glanced up when the visitor entered.

"Good-morning, Mr. Grosman," he said, quietly.

"Ah, you know me, then!" exclaimed Grosman, with a slight manifestation of relief. "I hardly hoped so much!"

"Your face is familiar," smiled the chief. "What can I do for you?"

"May I close your door, sir?"

"If you wish."

"Thank you! thank you!" Grosman nervously murmured, availing himself of the permission. Then, in response to a courteous wave of the hand from Chief Inspector Watts, the gentleman accepted the chair which already occupied a position at a convenient corner of the chief's roll-top desk.

"What is the matter, Mr. Grosman?" was the kindly inquiry. "You appear a little excited, or nervous, rather. I hope nothing serious has occurred out your way."

"I am nervous! I am greatly disturbed! Seriously so!" exclaimed Mr. Grosman, acknowledging with the easy grace of culture and refinement, despite his perturbation, the kindly interest so quietly manifested by the chief inspector.

"I have made a dreadful discovery this morning, and am here to employ you to thoroughly investigate the case. I beg that you

will undertake it, and you may spare no expense to get at the truth and to apprehend the perpetrator. I am really in a state of serious nervous excitement over it."

"Suppose you state the case itself," suggested the chief, with an odd little smile. "Draw your chair nearer, sir."

"Thank you! thank you! The fact is, sir, I have been very mysteriously robbed."

"Not robbed of this, evidently," laughed Chief Inspector Watts.

And he glanced down at the contents of a red morocco jewel case, which his caller produced from his overcoat, and now opened upon the desk. From the dark velvet lining there gleamed up at him a magnificent diamond necklace, manifestly of great value and blazing with the living light.

"It appears not, sir, on the surface," Grosman hurriedly replied. "Yet this is itself the evidence of the robbery."

"Well, that is rather curious," said the chief. "Please explain."

"I'll do so! I'll do so!" was the reply, made with a nervousness which the visitor seemed utterly unable to overcome.

"This jewel, Mr. Watts, was my bridal gift to my wife. It was a very beautiful piece of work at the time, mounting forty-two valuable stones, and it cost me, at the time of purchase, nearly \$14,000."

"You say—was!" interposed Chief Watts. "Is it not as perfect and beautiful now?"

"Far from it, sir!" was the impulsive exclamation. "More than half of the original jewels have been removed, and imperfect stones of much less value, yet so nearly resembling the original as to pass undetected a cursory examination, have been substituted. It has now less than half its original value, sir."

A curious expression stole about the eyes of Chief Inspector Watts.

"Ah, I see!" he exclaimed, in a slow, thoughtful way, with his gaze still bent upon the glittering contents of the morocco case. "It is rather a clever robbery, indeed."

"It is a case——"

"Which will require equally clever investigation," interrupted Chief Inspector Watts, with quick dryness. "I do not think I can

undertake the work personally, but I will assign it to one of my men."

"I would rather you yourself——"

"Pardon, I cannot think of it just now! But it shall receive the attention of a man whom I consider to be quite as capable as myself, I assure you, and his reports will come under my personal supervision, and shall receive my careful consideration. Garratt!" and the chief hailed the clerk, as the latter passed through the corridor without; "Is Inspector Keene about here this morning?"

"I believe so, chief," was the reply. "I saw him come in a while ago. I think he is in the men's room."

"Send him in here!"

"Yes, sir."

"I wish to ask you a few questions which possibly may have a bearing upon the robbery, Mr. Grosman," the chief explained while waiting. "If my officer is present at the time, it will relieve me of rehearsing all the details for his special benefit."

"I see, sir."

"Ah, Mr. Keene, come in and close the door. This is Mr. Francis Grosman, of Commonwealth Avenue, who has met with a loss which I wish you to look into."

Mr. Francis Grosman glanced up at the athletic figure and pleasing, grave face of the young man who had entered. He had heard the name of Sheridan Keene before, but was utterly unfamiliar with the exploits of these men whose vocation is to pursue vice to its lair. He had always felt that their business took them down to the plane of life with which he, with his inherent pride in birth and wealth, could have no affiliation.

Yet, and perhaps a little to his surprise, he found in Sheridan Keene's clean-cut face and searching eye a combination of qualities which impelled him to quickly rise and extend his hand to the young detective.

CHAPTER II.

WITHOUT A CLEW.

In a few words Chief Inspector Watts informed Sheridan Keene of the disclosure already made, then turned again to his visitor.

"Now, Mr. Grosman," he said, quite

brusquely, with that lighting of the eyes which, in men of great mental reserve, indicates a sudden, sharp quickening of thought; "when did you discover this robbery, and what do you know about it?"

Mr. Grosman drew a long breath. He was unaccustomed to mental excitement or physical strain, and this extraordinary occasion quite unnerved him. From childhood up he had known only the serene sweets of affluence, and had been reared to no greater care than that of his heritage of wealth; and no loftier ambition than that of preserving the unblemished integrity of a fine old family name. What wonder that he felt quite out of sorts and out of place.

Yet he managed to command himself so far as to reply readily, and with an animation stimulated by his nervousness.

"I know absolutely nothing about the robbery, Mr. Inspector," he rejoined. "I made the discovery only this morning, scarce half an hour ago."

"Under what circumstances?"

"Circumstances?"

"What led you to make it, I mean."

"Oh!—ah!—I see! I'll explain. You know about the coming great ball for the benefit of the charity fund?—of course you do. Well, sir, my wife is one of the promoters—she's always mixed up in some such an affair."

"Stick to the case, Mr. Grosman, please," observed the chief, with rather caustic dryness.

"Surely, surely! Well, sir, it will be an occasion when my wife will naturally want to wear her jewels, or some of them; and you know the great danger of wearing expensive jewels at such a time. Anticipating this danger, I decided to have my jeweler examine the necklace to make sure the settings were all intact."

"Who is your jeweler, Mr. Grosman?"

"Elbridge Kenney, sir, of Boylston Street. He is a personal friend of mine, sir, and a man I implicitly trust. He examined the necklace about an hour ago, sir. To my intense surprise and dismay, he almost immediately discovered the startling fact, which I have stated, that a majority of the original valuable stones have been removed and in-

ferior substitutes set in place of them. That, sir, is all I can tell you."

And the rather pale and insipid eyes of the gentleman from Commonwealth Avenue lingered with an expression of mute appeal upon those of the grave-faced chief inspector.

The latter sat silent for some moments, with his inscrutable gaze bent upon the face of his visitor, from which he drew but one main inference only—that Mr. Francis Grosman was telling the whole truth, in so far as he was able.

Sheridan Keene, who had remained standing, now drew a chair near an opposite corner of the chief's desk, where a block of blank paper was lying, and in a careless way took up a pencil. The chief observed, but made no comment.

"You are sure that is all the information you can give me, Mr. Grosman, are you?" Chief Inspector Watts at length asked, thoughtfully.

"Yes, sir, I am."

"You know absolutely of no person whom you would be inclined to suspect of such a theft?"

"None, sir."

"Nor of any occasion when, or circumstances under which, it might have been committed?"

"Neither, sir. I am utterly in the dark about it."

"Very well, Mr. Grosman," bowed the chief, now turning his chair a little nearer and deliberately closing the jewel case. "I wish you now to answer a few questions for me, and let your replies be as brief as comprehensiveness will admit."

"I will do so, sir."

"Evidently your jeweler, Mr. Kenney, was familiar with this ornament, since he detected the difference in the stones."

"Yes, sir, he was. The original purchase was made there. He detected the fraud immediately."

"Did he give you any estimate of the loss which you have suffered?"

"He said the value of the piece had been depreciated about fifty per cent., sir."

"Or in the neighborhood of \$7,000."

"Approximately."

"What else did he say about the stones?"

"He said that while they resembled the original ones in a degree, many of them had serious imperfections, observable with a glass, and that the fraud most likely had been perpetrated by some person in the jewelry business, or at least a dealer in precious stones."

"He expressed no opinion as to the identity of such a person, did he?"

"He did not."

"Was there a third person present at the time of your interview with Mr. Kenney?"

"No, sir. I was alone with him in his private office."

"Did you tell him you were coming here to see me?"

"It was he who advised it, sir."

"Did you come at once?"

"Yes, sir. I had my carriage at the door."

"Did Mr. Kenney tell any other person of the discovery just made?"

"I think not, sir."

The chief looked across the top of his desk and addressed a clerk in an inner office adjoining his room, the door of which was open.

"Robert, you see if you can get Elbridge Kenney, of Boylston Street, by telephone. If you can, say to him that Chief Inspector Watts asks that he will make no disclosure of the discovery made this morning relative to Mr. Grosman's property. If you can't get him by telephone, send a messenger with a note."

"Yes, sir." The answer came from the adjoining room.

"Now, Mr. Grosman, we will continue," said the chief, reverting to his visitor. "You say you have occasionally had this piece of jewelry examined. When was an examination made prior to that of this morning?"

"Some time last March, Mr. Inspector; I can't give you the precise date."

"Did Mr. Kenney personally make the examination at that time?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nothing wrong then, was there?"

"Not that he disclosed. I'm quite satisfied there was nothing."

"Where has the necklace been since that time?"

"It has been in my drawer in the safety

deposit vaults. I carried it there direct from Mr. Kenney's office at that time. I was about going abroad for a few months, and this piece, with some other ornaments of my wife, I did not wish to take with me. They all were locked in my drawer at the safety deposit."

"Were the other pieces of your wife's jewelry also examined at that time?"

"Some of them, I think."

"Who has access to your drawer at the safety deposit?"

"I alone, sir, so far as I know."

"And when did you go abroad?"

"Early in April, sir; and returned about the middle of September."

"Then, to the best of your knowledge and belief, Mr. Grosman, your drawer in the safety deposit vault was not opened during that interval?"

"No, sir, it was not."

"When did you remove this necklace from there?"

"About a month ago, sir. My wife wanted it to wear to the horse show."

"Has it been worn on any other occasion since you took it from the vault?"

"No, it has not; or, at least, not that I am aware of."

"Where has it been kept when not worn?"

"In the safe in the library of my residence, sir."

"What persons have access to this safe, Mr. Grosman?" demanded Chief Inspector Watts, who was rather warming to his work.

"Only my wife, my son and myself know the combination, sir."

"Is this safe usually kept locked?"

"Nearly always, sir."

"Now, Mr. Grosman, how much of a family have you?"

"Four, sir—my wife, myself, and two children, a son and a daughter."

"How old is your son?"

"Twenty-one, sir; he is a student at Harvard."

"Habits good?"

"Exemplary!" exclaimed Mr. Grosman, with a rather startled expression crossing his pale face. "But surely, sir, you would not suspect my son of——"

"Pardon, sir; I suspect no one as yet," in-

terposed Chief Inspector Watts, shortly. "What is your daughter's name, and how old is she?"

"Her name is Julia, and she is eighteen."

"How many servants do you employ?"

"Six, sir?"

"Run them over, please."

"I have a valet, and my wife a maid, sir. Then we employ a butler, a coachman, a chef, and one chambermaid."

"Have these servants been in your employ long?"

"Only the coachman, sir. The valet I brought with me from Europe. The others I engaged after my return."

"They came well recommended, of course?"

"Surely, sir! Otherwise I would not have employed them."

At this moment the clerk from the inner room entered the chief's office with the information that Mr. Kenney had not disclosed to any person the fact of this curious robbery, and that he would carefully refrain from so doing.

Chief Inspector Watts nodded his approval, and dismissed the clerk with a gesture. Then he held a brief, subdued talk with Sheridan Keene, and presently turned again to his waiting visitor.

"You said, Mr. Grosman, that the fact that your wife was likely to wear this ornament to the Charity Fund Ball next week led you to take it to Kenney for examination this morning. Did you tell your wife, or any other person, that you were about to do so?" he asked, gravely.

"No, sir, I did not," was the reply. "I had occasion to go to my safe this morning, and seeing the morocco case, I decided then and there to do so. I very likely should have deferred this precautionary step had I not had another errand which necessitated my coming down-town; but I decided I would bring the ornament along with me."

"Am I to understand that no person knows you have done so?"

"Yes, sir; I am quite sure of that," said Grosman, with decision. "I had on my top-coat at the time, and I slipped the case into my pocket, re-locked the safe; then came immediately away."

"Very well, Mr. Grosman!" Chief Inspector Watts now exclaimed, with a succession of short little nods. "The question now is: Do you want me to undertake to ferret out the criminal in the affair, and bring him to justice?"

The blue eyes of Sheridan Keene were casually raised from the block under his palm, and rested briefly on the face of the man opposite; but the pale, refined countenance of Mr. Francis Grosman did not change by so much as a shadow, with the asking of the chief's last question.

"Most assuredly I do!" he cried, with emphasis, like a man without even a thought that the investigation might incriminate one of his own flesh and blood. "Am I not here to ask that service of you? Good heavens, sir! this is a most extraordinary robbery, the like of which may threaten others also! A man's property is not safe in his own house! You may spare no expense, Chief Inspector Watts, in an effort to discover and arrest this crafty scoundrel!"

"And you are prepared to aid me, and to follow my instructions to the very letter?" demanded the chief. "My experience with you men of wealth has been, Mr. Grosman, that you are rather inclined to have too much faith in your own beliefs and deductions, and are quite likely to deviate from given directions. This investigation promises to be a very delicate piece of detective work, and only on one condition will I undertake it."

"And that, sir——"

"That you rigidly follow my instructions as long as I am engaged on the case."

"I pledge my word, sir, that I will do so!" cried Mr. Grosman, earnestly.

"Very well, then! We will proceed with that understanding," bowed the chief, with some relaxation of his brief austerity. "I will ask you no more questions this morning, but will rather give you my immediate instructions."

"I am all attention, sir."

"First, then, you will command your coachman not to disclose to any person that you have made a call upon me or upon your jeweler. And see that you make your commands so impressive that they will be obeyed."

"I will, sir."

"Then I want you to replace this case and necklace in your safe, unobserved by any person. And I want you to say absolutely nothing of the theft—not even to your wife and children. In a word, I want this case replaced in your safe, and to have it appear that no suspicion of any wrong exists. Do you understand?"

"Precisely, sir! And I will insure all you have asked."

"Now, again! Between now and the day after to-morrow you will, undoubtedly, take from home two or three other pieces of your wife's jewelry, and submit them to Mr. Kenney. I want to learn whether the theft is confined to this piece alone."

"I will do that, sir."

"But let it be done at a time and in a way that will give no probable occasion for suspecting your intentions. Make sure of that, Mr. Grosman!"

"I will, sir!"

"At about what do you value your wife's jewels, collectively? I think I have heard them remarked upon."

"At about forty thousand dollars, sir."

"Ah, indeed! A more valuable collection than I had imagined," observed Chief Inspector Watts, in his quiet way. "Select for this second examination by Mr. Kenney one or two of the larger pieces—those which Mrs. Grossman wears the less frequently, and which may, therefore, be moved more discreetly from the house for a time."

"I understand, sir! You may safely leave it to my discretion."

"Very well, then! And that will be all this morning. On the day after to-morrow, at this time, come here again and report the result of Mr. Kenney's examination. At that time I shall be prepared with a definite plan upon which to operate in the case. Once more—don't fail to follow my instructions, sir!"

CHAPTER III.

A DIAMOND CROSS.

"He seems quite void of any suspicion that one of his own family might be guilty of this crime," dryly observed Chief Inspector

Watts, rising to watch from his window the carriage of Mr. Francis Grosman, as it crossed Pemberton Square through the falling snow. "Possibly the disclosure of a similar case would have startled him, had I thought it wise to have opened his eyes."

"Then the case has a parallel, chief?" inquired Sheridan Keene, looking up from the block upon which he had made various memoranda.

"Oh, yes, several!" nodded Chief Watts, whose fund of information covers most of the crimes in the category. "There was a case of one Gordon Fiske, out in the city of Denver, who adopted a similar scheme to get money with which to cover peculations from his father, in whose silk house he was employed."

"I recall it, now that you mention it."

"Then there was a case in England, although the matter was hushed up at the time; and, in fact, never was disclosed outside the circle of Scotland Yard. I got it from one of the Bow Street runners. It was the affair of Lady Laura Radcliff, who took precisely this method of jewel substitution, and ultimately ruined her entire collection, in order to satisfy the demands of a gentlemanly scoundrel with whom she had become clandestinely associated in a way that might not have been pleasing to her husband had he learned the whole truth. Lady Laura slipped out of the net nicely, however, and managed to hoodwink his lordship."

Sheridan Keene laughed softly, and the chief quickly added:

"But I wouldn't as yet carry the analogy to a definite suspicion of any of the Grosman family. We will await his further report. Meantime, you had better take the case, and see first what you can learn at the safety deposit office."

"I will begin an investigation immediately," said Detective Keene, rising.

"Also see Kenney, the jeweler, and make sure that he discloses nothing."

"I will, sir! And wouldn't it be well to learn if Mrs. Grosman or her son, both of whom have the combination of the house-safe, have lately been to Kenney with any inquiries?"

"Yes—a good idea! And warn him spe-

cially against disclosing to either of them anything pertaining to the robbery, should they call hereafter."

"I will do so."

"If you run upon anything of consequence report it to me. Also make it a point to be present when Grosman calls here Wednesday morning."

"I will be here, chief, without fail."

And Sheridan Keene bowed, taking his hat, and presently withdrew to the general office, while Chief Inspector Watts, once having given the investigation in charge of the former, in whose sagacity he had an abiding faith, instantly dropped the matter entirely from his mind.

The report returned by Detective Keene on the following Wednesday morning, prior to the arrival of Mr. Grosman, served chiefly to narrow the circle of reasonable suspicion.

Careful inquiry at the office of the safety deposit vaults had revealed that illicit access could not possibly have been had to the property of Mr. Grosman without the irregularity being detected; and, further, that only Grosman himself had twice applied there for the purpose since the previous March, these visits fixing the precise dates of the deposit and removal of the jewels.

An interview with Eldridge Kenney, whose integrity in such a matter was considered reliable, had established the fact that he personally examined Mrs. Grosman's jewelry in March; that none of his employees had so much as seen it, hence could have had no part in the fraud; and that Mr. Grosman personally had carried the property away, with the expressed intention of immediately placing it in his drawer in the safety deposit.

Hence, if Grosman had told the truth, it became reasonably safe to assume that this crafty robbery had been accomplished since the removal of the jewelry to Grosman's residence on the 23d day of September.

"I think it is there we must look for the criminal," concluded Chief Inspector Watts, while he sat with Sheridan Keene, awaiting Grosman's arrival. "We will make a beginning there, at all events."

"How about the removal of the original stones, chief, and the setting of the substi-

tutes?" Keene suggested. "Is it not probable that that work was done outside?"

"In that case, some outside party is involved, though the work possibly may have been done by some inmate of the house. That remains to be discovered. The entire investigation is a decidedly delicate piece of work, and the field of possible suspects is wide; but I have formed a plan by which I think you may ultimately drive the game from cover. I am glad you happen to have no other case on hand, Detective Keene, for you are the very man for the work."

An inquiry as to the chief's plan rose to the lips of the young detective, but it was never uttered; for, at that moment, the man for whom they were waiting came hurrying into the office, without the ceremony even of announcing himself by a knock upon the door.

That Mr. Francis Grosman was even more nervous and excited than on his previous visit was immediately apparent. His delicate features were quite sallow, his eyes dilated, his tall figure tremulous and unsteady. He bore clasped in his arms, as if hurriedly gathered up from the seat of his carriage, no less than seven plush or velvet jewel-cases, of various shapes and sizes, making a burden which this punctilious gentleman, if in an ordinary state of mind, would not for a moment have thought of assuming.

"Dear me, gentlemen, I'm so glad I find you!" he at once exclaimed. "The half has not been told! I'm robbed of more than—"

"One moment, Mr. Grosman!" interrupted Chief Inspector Watts, with considerable sternness, though young Sheridan Keene felt very much inclined to laugh outright at the ludicrous distress of this man of years and wealth over so commonplace a matter.

"This excitement of yours is inexcusable, Mr. Grosman!" the chief bluntly added. "You act like a man robbed of all his possessions. The loss of a few thousand dollars' worth of diamonds is not a matter for you to lose your head over. This perturbation of yours will not help matters; quite the contrary; and as you are said to be worth a million or two, you should meet such a loss with at least reasonable composure."

"Good heavens, sir, it's not the loss!" Mr.

Grosman impulsively replied, with no apparent resentment of the chief's reproof. "It is not the loss, I assure you; it is rather the shocking fact that I have been made the victim of such an outrage, and the bare possibility that the criminal might at this moment be one of my own household! That's what distresses me, sir! Not the mere loss, I assure you."

"Well, sir, kindly sit down and compose yourself," replied Chief Watts, drawing a chair for his caller. "I'll relieve you of those boxes; there is room on my desk. If the criminal is indeed one of your household, we shall certainly run him down. But I wish you to entirely drop the affair, as a personal matter, and leave the investigation to us alone. Any self-betrayal on your part may ruin all our efforts."

"I will be very careful hereafter, sir; I will confess I have been greatly distressed."

"Now, what have you to report, and why have you brought these jewel cases down here?" asked the chief, when Grosman more composedly took the chair offered him.

"I have just come from Mr. Kenney's sir," Grosman hastened to explain. "These cases contain other pieces of my wife's jewelry. Mr. Kenney has just examined them, and states that, with but one exception, every piece has been treated in the same way as the necklace. Furthermore, that not less than \$15,000 is involved in the outrage."

"Did your wife take any of these pieces abroad with her last summer?" demanded Chief Watts.

"Yes, sir, several."

"Well, that is something! It establishes the fact that this robbery has been committed since your return, as it involves also the pieces left at home."

"I will show you these several pieces, sir, if you wish to see them," said Mr. Grosman.

And Chief Watts suffered him to open, with tremulous hands, the various cases, and display upon his desk a collection of ornaments one might well have envied him of possessing, even in their present condition.

It comprised a large brooch, in the rather mocking form of a horseshoe; two bar lacepins; a valuable chatelaine; a pendant cross,

fully two inches in length, together with several smaller ornaments of less value.

"With the exception of this"—and Mr. Grosman removed the cross from its velvet receptacle—"each of these jewels has had one or more original stones replaced by one of materially less value. I cannot understand why this, even, has been spared, for it contains no less than eleven diamonds, all of considerable value."

A curious expression came and went from the face of Sheridan Keene; but he merely glanced at the blazing ornament, and volunteered no remark.

"Has it been as easily available as the others to the person guilty of this theft?" asked Chief Inspector Watts.

"Yes, Mr. Inspector," was the reply; "the case has been with the necklace about all the time."

"At the safety deposit?"

"Yes, sir."

"And in your safe at home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do all these pieces belong to your wife?"

"All but one of the bar pins, which is the property of my daughter."

"We will close the cases again, Mr. Grosman. You are sure that their temporary removal from your house will not be discovered?"

"Quite so, sir. I brought them away less than an hour ago."

"I wish you to return them immediately after leaving here, and to rigidly adhere to my previous instructions," Chief Watts now commanded. "Have you observed an indication of suspicion or uneasiness on the part of any of your household, as if from apprehension that this theft may possibly have been discovered?"

"None whatever, sir."

"What is your coachman's name?"

"Joseph Holly, sir; he is English."

"Note the name, Inspector Keene."

"I have it, chief."

"How long has this man Holly been in your employ, Mr. Grosman?"

"Nearly five years; he is a model servant."

"Give me your butler's name?"

"James Vincent."

"That of your valet?"

"Jean Deverge."

"French?"

"Yes, sir; I brought him from Paris."

"Your wife's maid?"

"Louise Fenster."

"That of your chef?"

"John Paul."

"And the chambermaid?"

"Mary Dalton."

"Except the coachman, Holly, these servants are comparatively new ones, are they?"

"Yes, sir. I have had them in my employ only since my return from Europe."

"Give general satisfaction?"

"Yes, sir. If not, I should have discharged them."

"Mr. Grosman," and the chief swung a little nearer; "have you ever employed a secretary?"

"On one or two occasions I have, when my business or correspondence required it."

"Do you have an office down-town?"

"Oh, no, sir! I have no regular business."

"Then your private secretary has always been an inmate of your house, I take it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Under the circumstances, that is fortunate!" exclaimed the chief. "Now listen to me carefully, Mr. Grosman."

"I will, sir."

"I want you to insert in the evening papers of to-day a want advertisement for a private secretary. Prepare the way for this, and for his advent into your house, by casually remarking at home upon some business which you contemplate undertaking."

"I understand, sir."

"To-morrow, in response to your advertisement, Inspector Keene will call upon you and you will employ him in the capacity mentioned. He will thus install himself in your house, and you, sir, without the slightest deviation from the instructions I have given you, will then leave the entire investigation of this affair to him. You are quite sure you can follow these directions to the letter, are you?"

"Why, certainly I am, sir!" exclaimed Grosman, evidently with an immediate interest in, and comprehension of, the plan proposed. "You may safely depend upon me to this extent at least, Chief Inspector Watts."

"So I do depend upon you," Chief Watts rejoined, shortly. "And you, in turn, may rely upon Detective Keene to get at the bottom of this affair, if any man can accomplish it. After his advent into your house, moreover, you will be guided by his instructions —remember that!"

"I will, sir, surely!"

"That is all, this morning," bowed the chief, approvingly. "Take these gems home and replace them as usual, and expect Detective Keene at your home at a seasonable hour to-morrow morning. Receive him as a stranger, not as an acquaintance. Good-day, sir."

CHAPTER IV.

THE GAME BREAKS COVER.

It was not without some misgivings that Sheridan Keene entered upon the detective work assigned him. He fully realized its delicate character, if the perpetrator of the crime was indeed an inmate of the Grosman residence, and that any pronounced innovation there might tend to alarm the criminal. Hence, ostensibly it was a very unassuming young man who presented himself in response to the prearranged advertisement, and was ultimately employed as a private secretary by Mr. Francis Grosman.

But the advent of a new servant into the well regulated household of Mrs. Grosman did not appear to create even a ripple of disturbance; and for four days and nights, or over the following Sunday, the artful watchfulness of Sheridan Keene was unrewarded.

It enabled him to measure the inmates of the house, however, which also was not at all encouraging. Mrs. Grosman was a woman of forty, nearly twelve years younger than her husband, and a lady of culture, beauty and womanly dignity. Her daughter was a girl of eighteen, rather a spoiled miss, yet pretty, and, for the most part, pleasing. The son went daily to college in Cambridge, and was a manly youth, and the last person in the world to have been suspected of a crime. Indeed, the last might have applied to the entire Grosman family, Detective Keene was fairly compelled to decide.

Nor in the servants' quarters were his observations a whit more promising.

The coachman, Holly, was an Englishman of fifty, with a face as honest as that on a government coin, and an interest confined solely to horseflesh.

Deverge, the valet, was a French youth of exceedingly good manners, who talked in pigeon English, when he talked at all, which was seldom, and who appeared like anything but a criminal. Sheridan Keene soon discovered that he had been in America but about three months, and for the first time, and soon disregarded him entirely.

The cook, John Paul, was a stout, phlegmatic man, inclined to be very lazy, and who never showed his face outside of the kitchen except to seek his bed or his beer, which latter he favored in a modest way on the sly.

Of the women, of whom there were but two, Mary Dalton was a woman from the Provinces, well into middle life, and whose duties were of rather a general character, from the basement to the roof. She, too, was soon sifted out of the circle of general suspicion.

Louise Fenster, Mrs. Grosman's maid, and the only remaining servant, was a pretty brunette of twenty-two or thereabouts, of whom her mistress appeared noticeably fond. In fact, she was remarkably pretty, with features of classical regularity, with a rich complexion and warm, dark eyes, and a graceful and well-modeled figure, from her rounded arms and plump hands down to her dainty feet and ankles.

Mrs. Grosman evidently found her companionable, and fancied her for her beauty, openly displaying for her a fondness which the girl seemed to appreciate and strive to merit. Indeed, on Sunday morning, when Detective Keene saw this girl leave the house with her prayer-book reverently clasped in her pretty hand, and her eyes modestly lowered when she passed him in the sumptuous hall, the secretary quickly decided that she was by long odds the most attractive being of the entire house.

Yet, for four days, in so far as making any discovery pertinent to the robbery, the observations of Sheridan Keene, at times when

he was not for appearance sake engaged with Mr. Grosman, were absolutely without results.

But on Monday the game seemed to break cover.

There occurred an incident upon which he seized as a clew.

Dusk was falling outside, and Deverge was lighting the lamps in the front hall. From his desk in a small room opposite the large double chambers occupied by the heads of the house, Detective Keene heard the Frenchman strike a match; and almost at the same time he heard also the rustle of skirts, and the fall of hurrying feet toward the main stairs.

Quickly rising, he cautiously glanced out and saw Mrs. Grosman hasten down the front stairs, her manner indicating serious excitement. Making sure that he was not observed, he stole to the balustrade and looked over.

At that moment the mail-slot in the front door closed with a snap, and three or four letters fell to the hall floor. Upon these Mrs. Grosman pounced with startling avidity, and quickly selected one, the superscription upon which evidently met her gaze. She thrust it into her pocket, then turned and gave the others to the valet.

"Hand these to Mr. Grosman, Jean. He is in the library," she commanded, quietly, with a flash of her eyes in the direction of the room indicated, as if she were anxious to feel certain of having escaped observation. "Say those were all!"

"Yes, madam," bowed Deverge.

Then Mrs. Grosman hastened to her room again, while Sheridan Keene slipped into his own; and presently the detective heard her forcibly tear open the cover of the communication received.

"So, so! She has been watching for the carrier," he decided. "She is up to something unbeknown to her husband. I will follow where the thread leads me."

His room, allotted him at his own suggestion, was on the same floor as those occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Grosman. Off that of the latter was a smaller one occupied by Mrs. Grosman's maid. The valet had a room back

of the detective. The parlors, dining-room, and a fine library, were on the floor below.

Though Mrs. Grosman had at first opposed it, her husband had insisted that his private secretary should take his meals with the family, rather than be compelled to associate with the lower servants. This naturally was one of the provisions of Detective Keene.

The latter had an eye for Mrs. Grosman when she came down to dinner that Monday evening. Though she carried herself about as usual, her face was observably pale, and her occasional taciturnity indicated a rather serious train of thought. Yet she was a woman of much beauty and refinement, and was not easily to be suspected of deliberate evil.

But Sheridan Keene was a man who worked upon facts.

"Detain your wife and children in the drawing-room for a time," he said, aside, to Grosman, immediately after dinner. "Invent some story, if necessary, and make sure of holding them for a quarter-hour or more."

"But what's that for?" irritably demanded Grosman, who was not greatly pleased as yet with the success of the detective's efforts.

"Don't ask me what it's for," Keene returned, curtly. "Do what I bid you."

And without awaiting a reply, and disregarding Grosman's frown, he hastened upstairs to his room.

As the servants dined after the family, and the latter were to be detained below, Detective Keene felt insured of the opportunity for which he had planned—that of getting at the interior of Mrs. Grosman's private desk, which occupied a corner of her chamber.

Leaving his own room, he crossed the hall and entered that of Mr. Grosman, where he extinguished a dim light left by the valet.

"I will at least have an avenue of retreat, if needed," he mentally declared.

This room adjoined that of Mrs. Grosman, in which a bright light had been left.

"It saves me the trouble. Evidently she meant to return soon after dinner," thought Detective Keene, with a curious smile on his resolute face.

Entering Mrs. Grosman's room from that of her husband, the detective quickly approached her desk and tried the closed cover.

Both were securely locked and the keys removed.

"She's taking no chances, eh."

Feeling in his pocket for his own keys, he was about to drop to his knee at the desk, when, from the direction of the hall, the door to which was opened, there sounded a step as light as that of a cat, and just the faintest rustle of moving skirts—a sound that would have failed to reach any ears less alert and sharp than those of Sheridan Keene.

His face hardened instantly. Moving rapidly, yet silently, he slipped back through Grosman's room and into the hall. It was illumined only by the light in the hall below, and by that in Mrs. Grosman's chamber, yet objects were clearly discernible.

Standing motionless near the open door of her mistress' chamber was Mrs. Grosman's pretty maid.

With a quick smile, whatever he may have felt, Detective Keene immediately approached her, saying affably:

"Hello, Miss Louise! You haven't seen anything of a small package of papers tied with a red string, have you?"

The girl flashed a quick glance at him from her lustrous eyes, half-smiling, half-quizzical; then, with a captivating laugh, displayed her pretty teeth.

"No, I haven't, Mr. Greene," she replied, glibly, calling him by the name he had assumed. "Have you lost it?"

"I have mislaid it, or else Mr. Grosman took it away. I thought perhaps he had laid it down in his room, or his wife's. I have been in there for it."

"Yes, I heard you in there," smiled the girl, from under her drooping lids. "I wondered what you were doing!"

Her lowered voice carried a significance which Detective Keene decided to meet half way. He drew nearer to her, saying softly, as if with some misgivings:

"You don't think I did wrong in going in there, do you?"

"Well, I can't say you did just right."

"Do you think Mrs. Grosman will find fault?"

"She would if she knew it."

"And perhaps you mean to tell her, Louise?"

"Do you think I do?" the girl laughed, with an arch, upward glance at Keene's face.

"I'd rather have you say: 'I will not tell her!'" he muttered, pointedly, slipping his hand around hers. "What do you say, Louise?"

"What you would have me say—if you promise not to disclose it," she answered, with a curious light in her lifted eyes. "I'll agree not to tell her, if you don't."

"I'll give you my word I will not."

"I'll give you mine, then! I will say nothing about it."

"Say, Louise, you are a good—"

But she interrupted him with a soft, tantalizing laugh, slipping with a lithe movement from the arm which Keene would have placed around her; and, flashing a backward glance at him, half-inviting, half-taunting, she made for the near stairway.

Mrs. Francis Grosman was just ascending from the hall below.

CHAPTER V.

CHIEF WATTS TAKES A HAND.

Mr. Francis Grosman was a proud man, punctilious to observe all that culture, character and social etiquette require. He was proud of his aristocratic name, of its ancient lineage and honorable distinction. He was proud of his home, his affluence, and of his children; and, most of all, perhaps, of his beautiful wife, and the dignity and grace with which she sustained the Grosman prestige in society. Anything of the nature of a scandal, involving his name, would have been nothing short of a crushing humiliation.

Yet, that Mrs. Francis Grosman was engaged in some sort of an episode or an escapade, without the knowledge of her husband, Detective Keene had not the slightest doubt. Why else should she have troubled herself to watch for the mail-carrier, to intercept a letter from those he delivered, and to put a lie concerning them upon the lips of her husband's valet? And the observations of Detective Keene the next morning further sustained the suspicion he had formed.

Mrs. Grosman did not come down to breakfast with her usual promptness. In fact, the family had about concluded the meal

before her step was heard on the stairs. She was not descending alone, moreover, but was accompanied by her maid, with whom she was in earnest conversation.

From his seat at the table Keene could look into the front hall. As the women came down he observed that the maid carried her cloak over her arm, as if about to go out. The most natural conclusion was that Mrs. Grosman was about dispatching her upon some mission.

The circumstance was so unusual that Detective Keene attempted to turn it to account. With graceful conventionality he excused himself from the table, observing to Mr. Grosman, who glanced up when he arose:

"I will put a seal on the contracts that I am to take down to Mr. Hyatt, and go down with them at once. It will be well, don't you think, if they are delivered as early as possible?"

"Yes, I think so," nodded Mr. Grosman, taking his cue without any noticeable self-betrayal.

Emerging from the dining-room, Keene encountered Mrs. Grosman on the threshold, and politely stepped one side to admit her. He noticed that she was paler than usual, and her eyes had the appearance of one who had not slept. She had parted from the maid, Louise Fenster, who was now putting on her hat and veil before a mirror near the front door. On a small stand just beside her she had laid a letter, evidently one she was about to deliver.

Detective Keene glanced back. Mrs. Grosman had closed and latched the dining-room door. While she, no doubt, served some purpose of her own in so doing, it also served the purpose of Sheridan Keene.

With a smile, he casually approached Miss Fenster, whose veil required the usual amount of feminine manipulation, and, in fact, so had taken her attention that she did not yet observe him. He did not speak until he was fairly at her elbow, when, with a mere glance at the missive on the table, he observed pleasantly:

"You are going out early this morning, Miss Louise—and a perfect morning it is. I suppose you have been as good as your word, haven't you?"

With a quick movement, so impulsive that she involuntarily betrayed her startled misgivings, Louise Fenster caught the letter from the stand and thrust it under her cloak.

"Oh, Mr. Greene!" she exclaimed, wheeling about to face him, with cheeks now red and pale in turn. "How you startled me! You move about like a cat. What do you mean by——"

But Keene interrupted her with a playful little laugh.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "I didn't mean to startle you. I have just come out from breakfast. Were you afraid I'd see your letter and be jealous?"

The girl blushed deeper, shrugging her shoulders and laughing, and the light in her eyes was manifestly that of relief.

"Oh, no! Your jealousy would not bother me. I am not troubled with so many men that any one of them could be reasonably jealous. You asked if I had kept my word. Yes, I have; but I mustn't stand here talking with you," she hastened to add; "or I'll not hear the last of it."

Keene laughed, walking with her to the door, which he opened for her, saying ere she passed out:

"How bright the sun is on the snow! I wish you could wait ten minutes; I'd go along with you."

She paused for a moment on the threshold, and bent a look of mingled amusement and suspicion at him through the meshes of her dark veil; but the expression on Keene's attractive face was supremely innocent.

"I am sorry I can't wait," she rejoined, oddly. "Won't some other time do as well?"

"May I anticipate that other time, then?" the detective softly asked, with some eagerness.

Her eyes flashed sharply.

"If you like!" she exclaimed, just above her breath.

"I do like, Louise!" Keene rejoined, significantly.

Then he closed the door behind her, and watched her for a moment as she went down the broad granite steps.

Two minutes later, not a little to the surprise of Mr. Francis Grosman, who had, however, sufficient amount of discretion to

conceal it, Sheridan Keene, clad in his top-coat, softly opened the dining-room door and said in an explanatory way:

"I'll take the contract down to Mr. Hyatt at once, sir. It was his wish, you remember, that it should be brought in at as early an hour as possible."

"Very well; very well, Mr. Greene! Do so, by all means!"

So natural was the incident, despite that this stranger in the house was so quickly following her maid, that Mrs. Grosman's eyes were not so much as lifted from her plate.

Taking his hat from the rack in the hall, Sheridan Keene hastened to the nearest public telephone station, a walk of scarce a minute, and called up through the central station the office of the Inspector of Police.

"I want Chief Watts!" he announced over the wire, the connection having been made. "Is he there?"

The call was answered by the clerk in the chief's private office.

"He has just come in," he rejoined. "Hold the wire, and I will call him. Who shall I say wants him?"

"Say Keene—and in haste!"

The delay was momentary only. Then Sheridan Keene recognized the low, resonant voice of his able superior.

"Hello!"

"Hello, sir! Glad to reach you so promptly!"

"What news have you?"

"Both news and a suggestion!" said Detective Keene, speaking quickly, and with a significance which he knew Chief Watts would immediately understand.

"I am listening!"

"I have been watching Mrs. G. All is not right. Correspondence doubtful. Unable to examine any as yet. Appearances bad. Will give you details in person during the morning."

"I understand! What more?"

"Her maid has just been cautiously sent from the house with a letter, evidently an answer to one Mrs. G. received last night, and was very careful to secure unobserved. I think it would be well to discover its contents, if possible. The maid evidently is about to deliver the letter in person, as it bore no

stamp. She is now on her way, and with haste may be intercepted."

"You secured the address?"

"By good luck. It is James Barrister, No. — Salem Street. The girl cannot reach there before an inspector from Headquarters, if he starts at once. I consider the letter important. Can't it be secured without awaking the girl's suspicion? That should be avoided, I think."

"No doubt of it!" Chief Watts said, quickly. "Leave the necessary artifice to me. Describe the girl briefly!"

"Medium height, dark, and very pretty; clad in a black cloak, a black hat, with feathers, and she wears a veil."

"Sufficient! The address once more!"

"James Barrister, No. — Salem Street!"

"I will attend to the case! Can you easily report here in person an hour hence?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Do so! That's all!"

Explanations and instructions require time, and time was valuable. Chief Watts, therefore, did not detail one of his men upon the delicate work, but gave it his personal attention. He at once hastened to Salem Street, which is but a short distance from Headquarters, yet more than two miles from Grosman's house in Commonwealth Avenue.

Louise Fenster had not yet covered the distance, so expeditious had been the movements of Detective Keene and Chief Inspector Watts.

The Salem Street number mentioned was a lodging-house, one of the inferior dwellings of that ancient and run-down quarter of the North End. Yet the locality was tolerably respectable, with many clothing stores nearby, kept mostly by Jews.

One of these stores was next to the door of the dwelling—in fact, under a part of the house, which had been remodeled to meet the encroachments of business; and Chief Watts, with a quick glance, to assure himself that the maid was not yet approaching, immediately entered the shop.

A bearded Jew, well along in years, met him fairly on the threshold, with a profuse bowing and scraping and rubbing of his hands, and an eye that betokened his eagerness for trade.

"Vat vas you looking for, mine——"

"I'm looking for information!". Chief Watts curtly interrupted, flashing his badge. Answer me quickly! Who keeps the lodgings overhead?"

"Mine Gott——"

"Don't delay me with any of that! I expect somebody along here at any moment, and I want the information before she arrives. Who keeps the house?"

"Mrs. Isaac Cohen, a vidder, and a worthy woman, sir!" declared the Jew, governing his surprise. "She vouldn't harm a——"

"Oh, I'm not looking for her, but possibly one of her lodgers! How many has she?"

"Only three or four——"

"Men?"

"Two vimen and two men, sir."

"Do you know them by name?"

"All but vun, sir! He came theudder day, and——"

"Is he a man named Barrister?"

"I don't know that name, sir. He might be the last vun who came. The udders haf been here for years! For years, sir; and are worthy beeble! Mrs. Cohen vouldn't——"

"Never mind Mrs. Cohen!" said the chief, abruptly. "Yonder is the person I expect. Come out upon the sidewalk with me, and pretend you are trying to sell me that coat in the corner of the window. I wish to stand by your side, while I overhear what is said at Mrs. Cohen's door!"

"Mine gracious! but I vas so shaky I——"

"Silence! Pretend to be forcing this sale, and take heed you notice nothing else! Come out here!"

Through the store window Chief Watts had seen Louise Fenster approaching on the opposite side of the street, her evident uncertainty as to the precise location of the house at once indicating to him that this was her first visit. She discovered the number on the door, while he was thus instructing the Jew, and she at once crossed the street and mounted the wooden steps adjoining the shop window.

Then the door-bell of the house was heard to ring.

The Jew was brought to his senses by the severity with which Chief Watts had given the instructions. The latter caught up a coat

from a pile on a near counter, and, as if he were in reality demurring over a purchase, he led the way to the sidewalk, as if better to view one displayed in the shop window. He thus could take a position near the house steps, with only his shoulder visible to Mrs. Grosman's maid, had she by chance any misgivings; and, while he sustained a cursory dialogue with the clothier, he also could overhear what was said on the steps.

Louise Fenster's ring was answered by the landlady, and the former quickly asked:

"Does Mr. James Barrister lodge here, ma'am?"

"Yes, miss," bowed Mrs. Cohen, who was a thin woman, in hair-rats and a calico dress.

"Is he in, ma'am?"

"I think so, miss."

"I'd like to see him here at the door, please."

"I'll send him down, miss, if he's in his room."

The girl waited briefly, with her dainty foot nervously tapping the wooden step; then the door was opened again, and Chief Watts heard the deeper voice of a man, asking:

"What do you want of me, young lady?"

The chief did not quite like the voice; he has an ear for character in voices. But his own features were too generally known for him to take any chances in order to get a glimpse at the speaker.

"Are you James Barrister?" demanded Louise, quite pertly.

"Sure thing! What of it?"

"I have a letter for you——"

"From——"

"Never mind who it's from!" the girl cut in, sharply. "I was told to give it to no one but you!"

"Let's have it!" Barrister said, eagerly.

"And there's no answer, now!" exclaimed Louise, as she delivered the letter.

Nor, if there had been, did she wait for it. She quickly descended the steps and hurried away, without a glance at the two men near by; and the door of the house was instantly closed.

Chief Watts motioned the Jew into his shop, at the same time handing him the garment he had brought out.

"Take the coat along!" he commanded;

then he laid his hand heavily on the Jew's shoulder, adding with stern significance:

"And you keep your lips closed about this; If you ask a question, even, I shall know it—and 'twill be the worse for you! Mind that!"

"Oh, mine gracious, sir! I wouldn't speak of it!" protested the Israelite, waving his large hands about his unkempt head. "I wouldn't think about it, if you told me not to! I wouldn't even dream——"

But Chief Watts thrust him forcibly into the shop, and sharply closed the door.

Having with this celerity disposed of the clothier, Chief Watts waited on the sidewalk till Louise Fenster had disappeared in the direction of Hanover Street. Had he had less faith in the acumen of Detective Keene, he might have felt doubtful about taking the step he now contemplated; that of securing, by hook or crook, the letter just received by Barrister. But he rightly inferred that Keene deemed it important to discover the precise relations between this man and Mrs. Grosman, and that the letter alone would possibly reveal what both of the principals might, if their suspicions were awakened, successfully conceal.

To accomplish this object, Chief Watts adopted what seemed the most promising method—that of getting at Barrister before the latter could have destroyed the letter, if any occasion existed for so doing. If not, some plausible explanation of his intrusion could easily be invented.

His ring again brought Mrs. Cohen to her door, when the Chief said, blandly, in a moderately low tone:

"I want to see Mr. Barrister. He expects me, and I'll go right up to his room, if you don't object."

The woman drew back and let him enter, yet evidently wondered.

"Second floor, I think he told me?" said Chief Watts, inquiringly. "Am I right?"

"Yes, sir; the back room!"

"Thanks!"

And without further delay the chief mounted the stairs, and unceremoniously opened the door of the room mentioned.

A man stood in the middle of the floor, with his back to a small parlor stove, the door

of which had been opened to check the glowing fire.

The man started slightly when Chief Watts abruptly entered; but further than that he betrayed no perturbation.

Yet, with apparent indifference, he quietly turned and tossed both the letter and its cover into the stove.

Instantly the light paper was in flames.

CHAPTER VI.

BY THE BERTILLON SYSTEM.

Though by no means a man to betray himself, the chagrin with which Chief Watts witnessed the destruction of Mrs. Grosman's letter may be easily imagined; yet this act of Barrister had been performed with an air of unconcern that really offered no grounds for exception.

He was a man about forty, with a well-built and quite commanding figure, and a rather handsome face. His eyes were dark, and his hair and moustache plentifully sprinkled with gray. His coat and vest had been discarded and lay upon the bed, for the room was very warm, as if the fire had been inadvertently neglected.

With the destruction of the letter, Chief Watts instantly changed his plan. Without evincing the slightest interest in the burning missive, he at once said, courteously:

"Good-morning, Mr. Barrister! I am glad I find you in."

James Barrister stood looking at him with a steady gaze.

"Well, sir, glad or sorry, you have the best of me!" he replied, shortly. "I don't recall your face."

"Naturally not, since we are strangers. I am Chief Inspector Watts, of the police department.

"Oh, indeed!" said Barrister, with rather haughty indifference. "What is wrong, pray, that you are glad you have found me? I am not aware of being of any special interest to the police department."

"I don't say that you are," said Chief Watts. "But I am investigating a matter upon which I think you can give me some information. I want you to go up to my

office with me. Very likely you will not be long detained.

"What is the matter, sir?"

"I will tell you at my office."

"I would prefer——"

"But you will please give my wish the preference, Mr. Barrister," the chief curtly interposed. "Surely, in the interests of the law, you can have no objection to accompanying me."

The latter was said with a significance that brought a half-disdainful smile to Barrister's lips.

"Whether I object or not, there evidently is no alternative," he retorted, dryly. "Wait a minute and I'll go with you."

"There's no special hurry. Take your time in making ready."

Without replying, James Barrister completed his toilet and put on his overcoat and hat; and Chief Watts now observed that his garments were of superior quality and fashionable make; in fact, those of a man quite out of place in his present inferior lodgings.

The chief made no comments, however, wishing first to learn the precise nature of Sheridan Keene's suspicions; and, with only conventional remarks on the way, the two men left the lodging-house and walked to Headquarters. Not once did James Barrister betray either nervousness or anxiety; his very indifference, in fact, was to the mind of Chief Watts, just a little suspicious.

"Take a seat here for a few minutes, Mr. Barrister," he said, on entering the general office. "I'll be ready for you presently."

Barrister nodded carelessly and dropped into a chair.

"Keep your eyes on that man till I want him," said Chief Watts, to an officer in the corridor. "Is Inspector Keene about here?"

"He is in your office, chief. He just arrived."

The latter nodded and immediately joined Keene, and closed the office door.

A conference of half an hour followed, in which Keene reported all the evidence he thus far had gathered, and which had led to his suggestion of the early morning. At its conclusion Chief Watts said decisively:

"Is it very evident, Sheridan Keene, since Louise Fenster neither knew this man Bar-

rister nor where he lived, that the letter she delivered was, indeed, written by Mrs. Grosman?"

"I am satisfied of that, Chief Watts!"

"Hence it becomes very necessary, despite the side issues you have mentioned, to discover the precise relations of Mrs. Grosman and Barrister. I don't fancy the fellow. Have him brought in here, and you remain while I question him."

An expression of grave austerity had settled on the chief's face, when Sheridan Keene returned with James Barrister. It was not a look inviting equivocation nor evasion.

"Sit down there, Mr. Barrister," he commanded, indicating a chair near him. "I want you to answer a few questions."

The compliance appeared willing; yet, when Barrister entered the room and observed one piece of furniture, some of his color had faded, and Chief Watts noticed a fleeting change in the depths of his dark eyes. The piece was the broad oak cabinet with numerous small drawers; that lettered, "Bertillon System of Measurements and Photographs."

Chief Watts gave no sign of what he had observed. He glanced at Keene, who took a position near the chief's desk, and to the right of Barrister, who had removed his hat and laid it across his knees.

"What is your full name, Mr. Barrister?" asked the chief, with his searching eyes reverting to the man's face.

"Why are you subjecting me to this inquiry?" Barrister resentfully demanded, instead of replying to the question. "What have I done, that I should be humiliated in this fashion?"

"An honest man should feel no humiliation at being asked to aid the law in its efforts to discover crime and punish criminals," said Chief Watts. "Why do you object to answering my question?"

"Because I have rights in common with all good citizens," cried Barrister, hotly. "You would not bring one of your prominent men in here——"

"I would bring the mayor himself in here and question him, were the circumstances involving him the same!" Chief Watts sternly interrupted. "There has been a robbery

committed, and I think you know something about it. Now, the sooner you fall in line with me, the better it will be for you. Answer my questions. What is your full name?"

For the fraction of a second an expression of bitter ferocity fired Barrister's eyes, but he held himself in check, and he knew there was no escaping this inquiry. He sat silent for a moment, grim and pale, his gaze steadily meeting that of the chief; then he answered, sullenly:

"My name is James Barrister."

"Do you live in Boston?"

"I am living here now."

"Where?"

"Where you found me."

"When did you come here?"

"Four or five days ago."

"Where from?"

"Out West."

"That is indefinite," said Chief Watts, with ominous severity. "Look you, my man, don't try to evade me, for I'll not stand it very long."

"I came from California," said Barrister, with a sullen sneer. "I have been in the Klondike for a year back, and just came this way."

"At what place in the Klondike region were you located?"

"At Dawson City."

"How long were you there?"

"Nearly a year."

"Who heads the police department there?"

"I don't know his name," said Barrister, with a quick color showing in his cheeks.

"What!" exclaimed Chief Watts, derisively. "Do you mean to tell me you lived for a year in such a place as Dawson City, yet never learned the name of the chief police official? That is absurd, sir!"

"Absurd or not, I don't know his name," said Barrister, with a steadily deepening frown.

"You are not telling me the truth, Mr. Barrister!" cried Chief Watts, with severity.

"If you think that, sir, my asserting the contrary won't help matters," Barrister retorted.

"Where were you born, my man?"

"In Australia."

"Humph! You've been a good deal of a traveler, haven't you?"

"Rather! I never stay long in one place."

"I can imagine so! What business brought you to Boston?"

"Nothing special."

"Got any money?"

"Enough to stave off the 'Vag. law,'" said Barrister, curtly.

"Any friends here?"

"None."

"Any acquaintances?"

"Not a soul."

"You are sure of that?"

"Of course I'm sure."

"Yet Mrs. Francis Grosman, of Commonwealth Avenue, claims to know you," Chief Watts said, sharply, already convinced that the man had been lying from the first.

For a bare instant Barrister hesitated; then he said, slowly:

"The woman has the best of me, then, for I'm blessed if I know her, or ever heard of her."

"Oh, yes, you have!"

"All right, sir!"

"And you received a letter from her this morning. And you burned it the moment you saw me enter your room."

"Is that a fact?" Barrister sneered, with undisguised bitterness. "Since you seem to know it all, Chief Watts, what the devil's the use of questioning me?"

"Spare your sarcasm, my man."

"I say I don't know any such woman, and never heard of her."

"Didn't you receive a letter this morning?"

"Yes."

"Who was it from?"

"Nobody I knew! I've forgotten the name that was signed to it."

"Wasn't it addressed to you?"

"It was addressed to James Barrister, but it wasn't meant for me. There must be some other man with the same name."

"Why did you burn it, then?"

"Because I had no use for it."

"Barrister," said the chief, sternly; "you have been lying to me from the beginning to the end."

"Do you think so?" was the quick re-

joinder. "You might as well quit asking me questions, then, if you are better informed than I am."

"I think so, too," said Chief Watts, shortly. "You evidently aim to conceal your identity, my man, and bury your history under a rubbish-heap of untruth."

"You only take that for granted."

"But I think we may be able to corner you by inches," continued the chief, referring with an idiomatic anomaly to measurements based on the metric system. "Detective Keene, take this man into the measuring-room. We will see what the Bertillon System will disclose."

He rose while speaking, and Sheridan Keene bowed, saying:

"Very well, chief. Come this way, Mr. Barrister."

"One moment!" interposed Chief Watts, as the suspected man arose. "There yet is time for you to make a voluntary confession of who you are, and why you are here in Boston. I will add, moreover, it will be wise in you to do so."

Barrister's face, despite his general self-control, had become very pale. He met with a sullen glare of defiance the steady gaze of Chief Watts, and replied, coldly:

"I have nothing to confess! You may do what you like!"

"Take him away," said the chief. "Search him, and take his measure."

"This way, Barrister!" commanded Sheridan Keene.

The man followed, pale and frowning, but without a word.

The humiliating process to which he was to be subjected, was that of identification by the Bertillon System, invented by the French Chief of the Judicial Service, Alphonse Bertillon.

It is a system based on the fact that certain physical features do not change after maturity and full growth. The length and width of the head, the length of the middle finger, the foot, the forearm, the reach and height, the trunk, with the dimensions of the ear, the color of the eyes and hair, the profile, contour, etc.; these are chief among the features of this descriptive signalment.

No two persons being exactly alike, it is

impossible that two ultimate measurements can precisely agree. If, then, a criminal has been measured and recorded, a copy of which record is sent to all the police headquarters where the system has been adopted, a subsequent measurement in any of these localities will inevitably reveal the subject's identity and history, so far as was at first known.

If James Barrister had been previously measured, the only chance he now had of escaping identification, was that the measurement in one instance or the other might be inaccurately made.

He was removed to a room in which the appliances for measuring are kept. He made no further objections, knowing well that resistance would be met with force.

Sheridan Keene summoned two assistants.

"Search him first," he said, quietly.

It resulted in next to nothing. An inferior pocket-knife, a key, a few coins, and a small sum of money, were all that were found upon Barrister. Not a card or paper indicating his character, name or vocation.

"Take off your coat and vest, and your shoes and stockings," commanded Keene; and Barrister, sullen and pale, slowly obeyed.

"Sit down here, Mr. Barrister," said Keene, indicating a square stool of wood.

The assistants took the measurements, and Keene noted them upon a card.

With a pair of caliper compasses, graduated to minute variations, the length and width of the subject's head were taken. Then, with a caliper rule, the precise dimensions and distinctive features of his right ear. Then, against a background of white, his height, reach, and length of trunk were taken. Then the left forearm was bared and measured upon a table. Then the left middle finger, and then the left foot, while he stood on that alone.

"That will do now," said Sheridan Keene.

He took to Chief Watts the card on which he had noted the measurements. The chief turned to the cabinet with numerous drawers.

To facilitate comparison and identification, all records are classified into compartments, and these in turn are subdivided, and so on to the minute details of eyes, ears, lips, hair and eyelids even.

Chief Watts glanced at the head measurements, and turned to a set of drawers. The height and reach reduced the range of distinction. And so on until he presently opened one of the tiny compartments.

A series of questions followed, relative to the peculiar facial features, and presently Chief Watts quickly drew forth a card, smiling as he did so. It was the signaletic card of the man in the adjoining room; and it bore his photograph, front and profile.

"Bring the man back here," said the chief, gravely.

He read the card while waiting; and when Barrister entered the room, he turned the pictures toward him.

"Do you recognize these, my man?" he demanded, sternly.

Though very pale, Barrister was now very calm.

"The system is a good one," he said, simply, then sat down in the nearest chair.

"I will read you the record here!" said Chief Watts, standing before him.

"Your name is James Barrows. You were born June 12th, 1859, birthplace and parentage unknown. Profession, locksmith. You were convicted in Chicago in 1889 of burglary of a jeweler's store, and sentenced for ten years to the Illinois State prison, where you were measured two years ago. You—"

"I served my time and was discharged a month ago!" cried Barrister, forcibly, and he leaped to his feet. "Why am I brought here and subjected to this? You have no charge against me, for I have done no wrong, save that one! A convict cannot redeem himself because of men like you!"

There was something fairly pathetic in the man's sudden resentful violence, but Chief Watts demanded sternly:

"James Barrows, what do you know of the robbery of Mrs. Grosman's diamonds?"

Barrows, or Barrister, reeled as if struck a blow.

"Nothing at all!" he cried, vehemently. "I repeat again—I know no such woman!"

Chief Watts swung round to Sheridan Keene.

"Continue your work, Detective Keene,"

he said, significantly. "I will hold this man in custody pending your investigation."

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER THE CHARITY BALL.

It was on Tuesday that James Barrister was identified as the ex-convict discharged from the Illinois State prison, and detained in custody by Chief Watts on suspicion of being concerned in the Grosman robbery.

It was on Thursday, two days later, that one of the chief events of the Boston social season occurred—the Charity Fund Ball.

All the Grosmans were there, including even Mr. Francis Grosman. But he was bored by the occasion, and distressed by his knowledge that the jewels bedecking his splendid wife were wholly unworthy her own surpassing brilliancy. He was glad when it was over, and he could come home and again bury their mocking blaze in the gloom of the great safe in his library, and turn the combination on them. For him the whole affair had been shadowed by a very dismal and distressing cloud.

Breakfast was laid an hour late in the Grosman residence next morning. The last to appear was William Grosman, the son; and his immediate interest, rather than in the first course of chilled Malagas, was in the morning paper which was always laid beside his plate.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed, the moment he opened the sheet. "Have you read the news, father?"

"No, not yet," was the reply; "I never read it at the table with others, nor should you. It's not good form."

Despite this reproof, Mrs. Grosman immediately asked:

"What is it, Will? Something about the ball?"

"Something after the ball! The Couzons, of Brookline, were near being robbed."

"Robbed! Read it!" cried Grosman, elder, with a great start of surprise. "Where? When? By whom?"

Sheridan Keene looked gravely up from his seat at one end of the table, and saw the color fade by slow degrees from Mrs. Grosman's cheeks, and a light like that of simu-

lated apprehension show in the depths of her hazel eyes.

"Yes, read it, William!" she said, faintly. "Robbed—by whom?"

"Highwaymen! Foot-pads!" the young man replied.

Then, while he glanced through the rather startling story given by the press, he imparted in desultory phrases the main features, at which Sheridan Keene noticed that Mrs. Grosman was intensely disturbed within, and scarcely able to prevent the quivering of her jeweled hands.

"They were on their way home. Had nearly reached it. Were in a Russian sleigh, with their coachman driving. Mrs. Couzon had on nearly twelve thousand dollars' worth of diamonds and jewelry. Their house is on Brickston Park, off the Brighton Road. It is somewhat isolated. They had just entered the grounds, driving slowly in, so as to make the turn at the gate, when three men sprang out from among the trees, one of whom seized the off horse by the head. A second drew a revolver, and covering the head of the driver, ordered him to keep still and sit on his seat."

"Mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Grosman, with white cheeks and quivering lips.

The third rushed to the side of the sleigh, and with a weapon in hand, ordered both of the Couzons to give up their jewelry. Mrs. Couzon begged that her life should be spared and then fainted. Her husband's courage is extolled here at considerable length."

"Husband—what did he do?" asked Mrs. Grosman, faintly.

"He first pretended to yield, and begged the ruffian to commit no violence. Then, catching him unawares, he threw back the heavy robe and quickly drew a revolver, which he had carried as a provision against anything of this nature. He fired instantly at the fellow beside the sleigh, and thinks he wounded him in the shoulder, for the scoundrel uttered a cry of pain and fell prone upon the snow and ice in the driveway."

"Dear me, what a tragedy!" muttered Mr. Grosman.

"The report of the weapon so late at night frightened the spirited horses," continued his son; "which broke from the knave at their

heads, and dashed up the driveway. The robbers did not follow. The Couzons quickly reached the house, and the alarm was at once given. No trace of the scoundrels up to time of press, however. All three wore masks. One thought to be badly wounded. Blood found on the snow where the assault was attempted, and traced to the woods on the opposite side of the road. Police are making a hot search. They think the highwaymen knew of the ball, as well as the fact that Mrs. Couzon's jewelry would be of value, and that they took advantage of the isolation of Couzon's house to attempt the outrage. Great credit is here given to Mr. Couzon. That's about all."

Mrs. Grosman made an effort, and commanded her voice sufficiently to falter:

"Does the article—describe any of the—ruffians?"

"No, I think not," replied her son, glancing back over the story. "No, nothing more is said of that. They all wore masks."

"How very fortunate—their escape!" Mrs. Grosman now murmured, in accents of relief. "My coffee—Louise!"

"Fortunate?" demanded her husband. "You don't mean—"

"I mean the escape of the Couzons, of course!" she interposed, with a quick frown of displeasure.

It silenced the head of the house. He reverted to his grapes, and presently ventured taking a furtive glance at the detective.

Sheridan Keene, with a face as inscrutable as that of a sphinx, was staring at his plate.

Whatever its occasion, the perturbation of Mrs. Grosman on learning of the attempted robbery was noticed only by Keene, and possibly by Louise, who served in the capacity of a table-girl, as well as maid to Mrs. Grosman. Louise had observed that her hand trembled violently when accepting the coffee for which she had asked, but the girl was too well trained to remark upon it. Before the meal was ended, however, Mrs. Grosman was as composed as usual.

"I suppose you are acquainted with the Couzon family, Mr. Grosman," Sheridan Keene casually observed, the two being alone in the library a little later, ostensibly en-

gaged in the business for which the latter was supposed to have been employed.

Mr. Francis Grosman shrugged his narrow shoulders.

"Only indifferently," he replied, in a deprecatory way.

"Don't visit them?"

"Oh, no! Couzon is rather a parvenu. His father made money in soap, and died a millionaire, which was all right enough in a way. But they have no blood distinction."

"That's a drawback, yet a man in the soap business ought to have had a pretty clean record," said Keene, dryly. "Doesn't Mrs. Couzon call upon your wife?"

"Oh, no, no! Mrs. Couzon paints and is vulgar. She has none of the characteristics of my wife—none at all! She never calls here. Why do you ask? and how could you get such an idea?"

"Don't know, sir, I'm sure. Possibly because Mrs. Couzon also owns valuable jewels. I thought perhaps your wife and she had tastes in common."

"Indeed, no! Mrs. Couzon wears jewels ostentatiously, like an Amazon queen. My wife is quite the opposite in her tastes. By the way, sir, isn't it very curious that this attempt to rob the Couzons should follow so close upon my own experience?"

An odd smile stole about Sheridan Keene's lips.

"Either that or the opposite," he replied, equivocally, with a significance which the other failed to detect.

"It doesn't appear to me that you are making any headway with this case here," said Grosman, dubiously.

"Doesn't it, sir?"

"No, it does not! I'm afraid you're only wasting your time."

Keene frowned slightly and rose to his feet.

"I do not waste anything that I value, Mr. Grosman," he replied, pointedly. "It would require a man of perception, sir, to see wherein I am making headway in this case. Of one fact I beg to assure you, that when I have ceased to make headway, I shall have ceased also to be an occupant of your house."

This trenchant rejoinder brought Mr. Grosman to his feet with an apology.

"Oh, I beg pardon!" he cried. "I do not mean to offend, nor to interfere."

"I absolve you of the one as promptly as I would prevent the other, Mr. Grosman," laughed Keene, pleasantly. "I now am going away for two hours. Kindly give any curious people about here to understand that I am out upon business for you, not my own!"

"Surely, surely, sir! I really believe I am encouraged by your remarks."

Sheridan Keene did not particularly care whether he was or not. He went to his room for his coat and hat, had a bantering word with Louise in the upper hall, and presently emerged from the house into the frosty air and bright sunshine of Commonwealth Avenue.

His mission that morning took him in an opposite direction to that of Headquarters. Few persons, observing him, would have taken him for a detective, and one of the shrewdest analysts of human character and circumstantial evidence that ever devoted himself to investigating crime and running down criminals.

And not one, indeed, though conversant with all of the superficial facts in the Grosman case, would have dreamed of what Sheridan Keene already knew on that bright, wintry morning; nor have foreseen with what sagacity and cunning he was about to evoke disclosures that were to amaze the entire community by their startling exemplification of detective genius.

CHAPTER VIII.

DETECTIVE KEENE TAKES AN ASSISTANT.

The mission of Detective Keene that morning took him to Brickston Park, and about ten o'clock he approached the pretentious suburban residence of the Couzons. It was an expensive place, somewhat off the main avenue, and in a native woodland that was gradually dwindling under the encroachment of dwellings. As was intimated in the press reports of the previous night's outrage, the location was well chosen for such a design.

In the driveway near the entrance to the grounds, several men and boys had collected, and were curiously regarding a few patches

of red blood in the surrounding snow and ice, and Detective Keene at once inferred that that was the immediate scene of the attack. He had no time for listening to their comments, however. His interest there was unlike that of any other caller that busy morning.

"I wish to see Mr. or Mrs. Couzon," he said, to a girl who answered his ring at the house.

"Mr. Couzon has gone to town, sir," she replied.

"Mrs. Couzon will do."

"Come in, sir. Will you send your card?"

"My name is not known here," said Sheridan Keene, pausing on the threshold of the elaborate reception-room. "Say to Mrs. Couzon, however, that I will intrude only briefly, yet upon a matter of serious importance."

A response from the girl was made needless by the mistress herself, who evidently had been looking down from the hall above. She at once came down the stairs, a large woman clad in an elaborate morning-gown, and with a rather handsome, yet masculine, type of face. Keene saw at once why Mr. Grosman had likened her to an Amazon queen.

"You may go, Rosa; I will see the gentleman," she said, as she descended the stairs. "How can I serve you, sir?"

The last was addressed to Keene, with a free-and-easy smile, and a wave of her hand toward the reception-room, into which he entered. She closed the door and stood waiting, while he replied:

"I presume you are Mrs. Couzon," he said, in his pleasing way. "I am an inspector of police, madam, and wish to ask you a few questions bearing upon the attempted robbery of last evening."

"Goodness, sir!" she exclaimed, laughing, quite as if the notice she had received through the affair was rather to her taste. "You are the third officer who has called this morning!"

"Is that so?" smiled Sheridan Keene. "Were the others members of the regular police, or of the detective service?"

"One was a policeman. The other said he came from Pemberton Square."

"Well, I come from Chief Inspector Watts,

and I imagine that my inquiries will be in a line quite different from that of the others. And possibly quite as productive of desirable results," he added, significantly. "I trust you will consent to favor me."

"Why, surely!" bowed Mrs. Couzon, with just the least bit of coquetry in the flash of her dark eyes. "Take a seat, Mr. ——"

"My name is Sheridan Keene—thank you."

"Now what can I say for you, Mr. Keene? The attack upon us was made just after—"

"Pardon me, Mrs. Couzon, but my interest lies entirely in the things anterior to the crime. I work from deductions chiefly."

"Dear me! Logic is quite out of my line, Mr. Keene!"

"You can best serve my purpose by answering a few questions for me, Mrs. Couzon."

"Ask them!" laughed the lady.

"To begin with, then, how many servants do you employ?"

"Five, when here in town. I take but three to our shore house."

"You have five at present?"

"Yes, sir. I think I guess your suspicions, now, but I am quite sure my servants are trustworthy."

"Because they have been with you for a long time?"

"Partly for that reason. I have had the three I take to the shore, let me see, for nearly six years."

"Ah, yes. And the other two?"

"Both are young girls, merely; a maid and a table-girl."

"When did you engage them?"

"In October, on my return to town."

"In place of two discharged when you went away in the summer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who were the two discharged, please?"

"One was a girl named Lizzie Maxwell. The other was named Mary Fallon."

"Have you seen either of them since they left your employ?"

"No, sir."

"And, presumably, do not know where either can be found?"

"Indeed, no! I never keep run of old servants. Those I have are enough!"

Detective Keene joined in her significant laugh.

"Do you happen to be acquainted with the Grosmans, of Commonwealth Avenue, Mrs. Couzon?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" and the lady swelled a trifle.
"I know Mrs. Grosman well!"

"Do you call upon her?"

"Well, no, not exactly, sir! Still, we are good friends."

"Could you identify any of your assailants of last night?"

"Dear me, no! I fainted dead away—like a weak fool! If it hadn't been for my husband the scoundrels could have carried me off bodily, say nothing of my jewels."

Keene had vague doubts of this, looking her over, but did not express them.

"I suppose you would like to have the knaves apprehended, Mrs. Couzon?" he said, gravely.

"Indeed! yes."

"Would you be willing to co-operate with me in a very simple way, if, by so doing, their arrest would be insured?"

"I think so; yes. But I don't know in what way I can do so."

"I will explain very clearly. What you will have to do will be simplicity itself. But I shall be compelled to insist that you do precisely what I require, and absolutely nothing more."

"I will hear what you require of me, Mr. Keene, and if it appeals favorably to my judgment, I will consent to your proposition," said Mrs. Couzon, a little perplexed.

"No one could ask more than that!" Sheridan Keene said, warmly, with a grateful bow. "Now kindly give me your attention, and I will tell you in confidence a curious little story."

It required a half-hour, however, and when he departed, taking with him the assurance he desired, Detective Keene left Mrs. Couzon very pale about the ears; and upon her face a look of mingled amazement and dismay to which a verbal description could not half do justice.

It was after one o'clock when Detective Keene returned to the Grosman residence; and the sharper light in the depths of his grave eyes would have been attributed, by

those who knew him best, to the near culmination of that delicate task upon which he craftily had been at work. Yet there still remained the most delicate and hazardous move of all, so important that success and failure therefrom hung evenly balanced.

It was at such a time, however, that Sheridan Keene habitually rose to the very height of his detective genius. It is when under the very wire that a thoroughbred's nerve and mettle attain their limit of power.

Luncheon had been served when he arrived, and he found Grosman impatiently pacing the drawing-room, irritated by his wife's unusual petulance, and more by his renewed doubts of Sheridan Keene's ability.

The latter paused for a moment only, and said:

"Wait here, sir. I wish to speak to you presently."

"Why not now?" asked Grosman, impatiently.

"Because I prefer later," Keene replied, curtly. "Kindly do what I ask!"

He did not wait for an answer, but went up-stairs to his room. Throwing off his coat, he hurriedly wrote a note to Chief Watts, requesting him to invent some plausible occasion for detaining the bearer until after dark, and carefully sealed the missive. Then he returned to Grosman.

"I wish you to take this letter down to Chief Watts," he said, quietly. "Please do so at once, and by way of the electrics."

Grosman turned fairly livid.

"Am I a common messenger?" he said, angrily. "I will send my valet."

"I have other work for your valet, sir!"

"But I refuse to!" but the fire that leaped up in Sheridan Keene's eyes silenced him then and there.

"Sir, you will do what I ask, or I will instantly throw up this case for good and all!" said the detective, with terrible sternness.

Grosman drew in his horns.

"I'll take it," he said, sullenly; then turned back to add: "But if nothing comes of your efforts by to-morrow, I will appeal to Chief Watts for a more competent officer!"

"You will have an opportunity to make the appeal when you deliver the letter!" retorted Keene, dryly. "If you don't find him at his

office, wait there till he comes in. Remember that, also!"

Five minutes later Mr. Grosman left the house, uglier than a bear.

Ten minutes after his departure, Keene called the valet into his room and gave him a sealed envelope, also. The sheet within was blank, however.

"Jean, do you know the way to Hyde Park?" he demanded.

"No, monsieur; but I can find it," the young Frenchman replied, seeing an opportunity for an outing.

"Take this letter out there, then, and deliver it," said Keene, shortly. "If you find the street and number, you will do wonderfully well. You can inquire, if you have any difficulty. Start at once, please."

The valet needed no second bidding, and the detective was rid of him more easily than of his master.

Within another quarter-hour the butler also had been sent from the house to South Boston. Of the servants, there now remained only the cook and the kitchen-girl, and Mrs. Grosman's maid, who was with her mistress in the latter's chamber.

This state of affairs was apparently satisfactory to Detective Keene. He now cleaned up his desk, put in order the room he had occupied, and laid his overcoat and hat conveniently upon a chair, as one might who contemplated presently making a permanent departure. Then he sat down and waited, with the door of his room ajar.

An hour passed, and the clock in the hall struck three; yet Sheridan Keene did not move, nor was his patience seriously tried. He had abiding faith in his own perception and deductions.

Nearly a half-hour later the doorbell rang. Presently it rang again, and then he heard Mrs. Grosman say, irritably:

"Why doesn't James answer that bell? Louise! Louise! is the butler out? Go answer the bell."

Keene rose and stole softly to his door. He heard the maid quickly leave Mrs. Grosman's room, and hastened to the hall stairs. Then he followed her, saying cautiously:

"I'll go down, Louise, if you wish!"

"No, I'll go!" she called back. "James is probably out, or asleep——"

Then Keene saw the girl suddenly stop, when half way down the stairs, and cover her face with her hands. He sprang down, and caught her about the waist.

"What's the matter?" he asked, in a hurried whisper.

"Oh, oh, I'm so dizzy!" she gasped. "My head is whirling! I—you go! you go—please!"

She scarce could speak the words. She swayed in his arms, as if fainting, and Keene hurriedly thrust her up the stairs.

"Slip into my room!" he said, softly. "There's water there. I'll answer the bell."

He went down to the door without one backward glance. From where the brief incident had occurred, he could see the caller on the outer steps, through the window of the door. It was a lady—Mrs. Couzon.

Yet she met Sheridan Keene like a total stranger.

"Is Mrs. Grosman at home?" she asked, simply.

"I think she is, madam. Will you walk in?" bowed the detective, showing her to the reception-room. "I will speak to her."

"Say, please, that Mrs. Couzon, of Brookline, would like to see her for a few moments concerning the ball of last evening."

"Certainly, madam."

As Sheridan Keene reached the head of the stairs, Louise met him with a low, hurried whisper, and a look of infinite gratitude.

"I'll tell her!" she said. "Let her think I went down!"

Keene nodded, and winked, understandingly.

A little later Mrs. Grosman went down to her caller. Presently Louise also had an errand down-stairs, but not to the reception-room. At the end of ten minutes she returned, and knocked softly on Keene's door.

"Come in," he said, pleasantly.

The girl entered quickly. Her cheeks were still quite pale, but she was smiling, and her eyes were bright. Evidently she had heard something that had pleased and relieved her, for the last sign of the late attack of vertigo had vanished. She ran ea-

gerly to Sheridan Keene, who sat at his desk, and threw her arms around him.

"That was awfully good of you, Mr. Greene!" she cried, with feeling.

Keene looked at her as if amused.

"What was?" he asked.

"Helping me on the stairs. I don't know what caught me so suddenly. I guess it's my heart."

"Well, that makes us even," laughed the detective, pressing her hand. "You once did me a turn, you know."

"And I'll do you another, if it comes in my way," said Louise Fenster, with a flash of her warm eyes.

"Which I am sorry to say may not," said Keene, regretfully; "for I get through here to-day."

"Not for good!" exclaimed Louise, with amazement.

For an instant the girl's gaze met his as if she would have read his very soul.

"It's true, Louise. I'm remaining now only to settle a bit of bad business with Mrs. Grosman, if I can catch her alone in her room."

The girl looked perplexed, and said:

"Won't I ever see you again?"

"Would you like to?"

"Why, of course!"

"Then I'll try to fix it so you can," said Keene, with a genuine intention to do so. "Hark! Mrs. Grosman is coming now. She mustn't find you here!"

The street door was heard to close. Mrs. Couzon had gone. Louise Fenster quickly withdrew from Keene's room, and he heard her pass through Mrs. Grosman's and enter her own, which adjoined it.

"Now, my lady!" he said to himself, rather grimly; "we will force the game to break cover!"

CHAPTER IX.

A STRATEGIC MOVE.

Sheridan Keene heard Mrs. Grosman return to her chamber, and when she did not speak upon entering, he drew an accurate conclusion—that her maid still was in her own room, doubtless with ears alert to discover the nature of his interview with Mrs.

Grosman. He had no particular objection to this.

He did not delay for a moment. Crossing the hall, he softly closed the door of Mr. Grosman's room, then proceeded to that of his wife. The door was partly open, and he closed it behind him after entering.

Mrs. Grosman, who had paused for a moment before her mirror, heard the latch catch, and turned about as if startled. A wave of crimson swept to her handsome face, then instantly receded.

"Why do you enter my room, sir?" she demanded, sharply. "Leave it at once!"

"Presently, Mrs. Grosman," Keene firmly, yet courteously, rejoined. "I first want a word with you alone here."

"I will see you in the library, sir."

"Better here than in the library, for your own sake. What I have to say—"

"I refuse to listen here, sir! You are insolent! Leave here at once, or I will call an officer and have you ejected from the house. How dare you—"

"Pardon, madam!" and Sheridan Keene checked her angry speech, and threw back the lapel of his coat and displayed his badge. "I am an officer, if you require one! I am an inspector of police, Mrs. Grosman; here, not as your husband's secretary, but on a duty far more serious and exacting. My duty compels me to be firm. I earnestly beg that you will not, by resistance, force me also to be severe."

Every vestige of color had left Mrs. Grosman's cheeks, and she was trembling violently.

"A detective!" she exclaimed, faintly, staring with wild eyes at his grave face. "Merciful heavens! what does it mean? Am I lost? Does my husband suspect? Tell me why you are here? Tell me—tell me!"

The last broke from her tremulous lips like a cry of passionate dismay. Despair and terror were pictured in her hueless face. Sheridan Keene had mercy, and he waved her to a chair; yet he said, quite sternly:

"Calm yourself, Mrs. Grosman! Excitement will avail you nothing. I want you to answer a question. What is James Barrister to you?"

It seemed to answer her own question.

She tottered like one whose knees give way. Then, suddenly, she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears, sinking into the nearest chair and sobbing convulsively. It was the collapse of a woman whose heart was broken by an exposure she would have sacrificed a fortune to prevent, yet realized was now beyond prevention.

"I am sorry to distress you, Mrs. Grosman," said Detective Keene, considerately, yet with unabated firmness; "but the circumstances require that I should know the whole truth. If you confide it to me, you may be spared the pain of being forced to tell it to others. You must answer my question. What is James Barrister to you?"

Instead of what he asked, she moaned, pathetically, and cried:

"I will tell my husband; not you! Please call my husband! I will confess——"

"Pardon me; your husband is not at home. There is no alternative, Mrs. Grosman. You must answer my question. What is James Barrister to you? Either answer, or I shall be compelled to arrest you."

She looked up at him with a great fear in her swimming eyes.

"To my eternal shame, sir," she sobbed, piteously; "the man you speak of is my brother!"

"Your brother!" exclaimed Keene, without a change of countenance.

"Yes, my brother! But his name is not Barrister. It is James Barrows."

"Do you know where he is?"

"He is here in Boston," sobbed Mrs. Grosman.

"Have you seen him lately?"

"No, sir."

"You have communicated with him."

"I admit that."

"What was the nature of the communication?"

"Why do you ask me that? Why must I tell you? I will confess all to my husband, and implore——"

"One moment, Mrs. Grosman! There may be no need, now, of your telling him what you seem to have in mind. I am not here to expose family secrets; and if James Barrows is really your brother, I may have

been all wrong in my deductions. You must tell me the whole truth."

Mrs. Grosman, with a sudden flame of hope lighting her eyes, started up from her chair.

"Do you mean that my husband does not already know my dreadful secret?" she cried. "Did he not bring you here to expose it?"

"Nothing of the kind. But I cannot tell you, before knowing the nature of your secret and of what your relations with Barrister consist, why I was employed to come here," said Detective Keene, sternly. "If you will tell me the whole truth, it may possibly operate much to your advantage."

"I will! I will do so!" cried Mrs. Grosman, impulsively, grasping at the possibility he suggested. "I will tell you everything,"

"Answer my questions, then. What are your precise relations with Barrows?"

Mrs. Grosman dried her eyes, and explained.

"James Barrows is my brother, sir, two years my elder. He went West in his youth, and at times was very wild. But, at least, he was kind and generous to a fault, and I dearly loved him, despite his weakness, and could not have believed he would commit a crime."

"I appreciate your sisterly feelings."

"When I married Mr. Grosman," she continued; "I was advised by my father to say nothing of Jim, who had not been East for years, and of whose habits we all were much ashamed. Mr. Grosman is a proud man—proud of his connections and his family honor—and I foolishly deceived him, and concealed the fact that I had a brother of whom I was ashamed."

"I understand."

"Ten years ago news came to me from the West, that James had been convicted of a terrible crime, and sent to prison for ten years. I cannot describe my distress. I cannot tell you what efforts I made to keep the shameful fact from my husband. But I succeeded, and to this day have believed him ignorant of the fact that he is married to the sister of a convict."

"From what I have seen of Mr. Grosman, I easily can appreciate your delicate consideration," said Sheridan Keene. "Go on, please."

"A month ago, sir, Jim was liberated from prison. I wrote him a letter, begging him to begin life anew, and offering to give him financial aid, if he only would do so; and I at the same time sent him money, and wrote him how I had deceived my husband, and implored him not to betray me in any way. Then I received a letter from Jim, saying he would kill himself before he would disgrace me in the eyes of my husband, and so evoke his censure. Jim was always loyal to me in his poor, weak way," added Mrs. Grosman, with a sob.

Sheridan Keene now plainly understood Barrows' conduct; why he had burned the letter, and denied both himself and this woman; and for his loyalty, at least, the detective could admire the convict.

"I received a letter from Jim after he arrived here," Mrs. Grosman continued. "He is at a house in Salem street. I sent my maid to him with a note, telling him not to come here, and that I would visit him as soon as I could. I was so busy preparing for the ball, that I could not go at once; and to-day I have been utterly unable to go. I wish to carry him money; I wish——"

"That is quite sufficient, Mrs. Grosman," interposed Keene, moved by her emotions. "You have opened my eyes to my own misinterpretation of your conduct. I now will assure you of two things."

"Yes," she murmured, with lips quivering.

"First, that there will be absolutely no occasion for you to undeceive your husband, who is quite as well off if he doesn't know all there is to be known."

"Oh, sir!"

"And second," smiled Keene; "if you will plan to come alone to the office of Chief Watts to-morrow afternoon, you there can meet your brother; and I will add, too, that I am inclined to think he will prove true to his promise of reformation; and not only I, but Chief Watts, also, will do all in our power to aid him and to shield you."

Mrs. Grosman's splendid eyes were flooded anew, and she impulsively came and gave both her hands to Sheridan Keene.

"Oh, let me ask your pardon for——"

"Hush! there is no occasion!"

"But how did you know Jim?"

"He is at this moment under arrest here."

"Arrest——"

"Don't be alarmed. He has committed no wrong."

"But why, then?"

"Because, Mrs. Grosman," and Keene's voice now rose several degrees; "there has been a robbery committed in this house, and he was at first suspected. Your diamonds have been stolen, and inferior stones have been substituted in their place."

"Good heavens! My diamonds!"

"Your husband knows all, and hence my presence in your house. He will explain to you this evening. But I see, now, that I have judged your conduct erroneously. I am very much chagrined, and I beg your pardon. But since Mrs. Couzon called here, I think I may be able soon to get on the track of the men who not only attempted to rob her, but likewise are guilty of the theft committed here."

"Oh, I am so amazed I can't understand it all!" cried Mrs. Grosman.

"And really I cannot stop now to explain," said Keene, in more hurried tones. "It all will be cleared later. I must hasten to Chief Watts, and tell him of the new developments. But have no fear. We presently shall run down the guilty."

"God grant it!"

"I will go now, and shall return no more. Make your call at Headquarters to-morrow, and meantime say nothing of your brother. I now must take up a more promising clue. Don't trouble to come down to the door. I must hasten, and will say good-by to you here!"

"Good-by, Mr. Greene."

"My true name is Sheridan Keene!"

"Oh, I shall always remember it!"

Again, with tearful eyes and breast heaving, Mrs. Grosman gave him both her hands.

Then Keene hastened from the room and the house.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE ARTIFICE OPERATED.

The victim of what had appeared like abject failure, Sheridan Keene left the Gros-

man residence, and started down town without so much as one backward glance.

The early darkness of the winter afternoon was rapidly falling. The air was sharp, and the streets white with the last fall of snow.

Keene walked a block, turned the corner, and stopped. When it became a little darker, he stole back to a doorway, from which he could view the house he had left, and fell to watching it. He had waited less than thirty minutes, when his anticipations were realized.

The figure of a girl, whom he instantly recognized to be Louise Fenster, emerged from the Grosman house, and started down town. She was clad in a dark cloak, and her features were hidden by a thick veil. Her every movement, after she was safely out of the house, was that of intense excitement and ungovernable haste.

Detective Keene, with the skill of an expert, took up the pursuit and constantly shadowed her.

At the end of a half-hour, she entered an office building well down-town, and climbed the stairs to one of the offices. On the door was a printed sign:

DICKSON AND KELP,
Diamonds.

Keene followed her as far as the head of the gloomy stairs.

She tried the door and found it locked. Then she shook it with all her strength, as if wild at the mere fact of the occupants' absence; and Keene saw her beating her hands with mingled rage and dismay.

Then she drew a letter from her bosom, and stooped to thrust it under the door; but, after an instant, impulsively changed her mind, as if the chances to be taken were deemed too desperate.

Then she darted toward the stairs, and Sheridan Keene slipped out ahead of her, and waited in the street.

He was not kept there long. Down came Louise almost directly, and started off in a new direction; and the detective smiled grimly, and resumed his pursuit.

At seven o'clock the girl approached a small wooden house on a side street in the suburb of Chelsea. Evidently she had been

there before, for she went direct, and at once tried the door on arriving. It yielded, and she entered the house.

Through the starlight of the clear night, Sheridan Keene darted into the yard, and quickly approached a side window, one of a room in which a light was burning. Between the lowered curtain and the casing, he could see a part of the room. It was the dining-room of the house.

In an easy chair in one corner sat a man in middle life. His face was pale, and his arm was in a sling. He had been shot.

At the table, a younger man was seated, eating his dinner. But he bore no marks of violence.

These were Dickson and Kelp, commission dealers in diamonds and precious stones, and a pair of precious scoundrels they were—as well as the bright beauty and artful maid who operated with them.

Dickson started up from his chair and uttered a cry of amazement, when Louise entered the room and threw back her veil.

Her face, despite her haste and excitement, was as white as that of the dead; but her eyes were ablaze with living light.

"Good God!" cried Dickson, clutching his wounded shoulder. "You here!"

"Yes, I am here!" cried the girl, with her voice shrill and thrilling with bitter dismay.

"What's wrong?"

"Everything! The game is up! I've been to your office, and then came here."

Keene did not wait to hear more just then. He stole round the house and tried the back door. He found it unlocked, and softly stole into the back porch, and thence to the kitchen. It was dim there, but the door of the adjoining dining-room stood open.

Louise Fenster was still speaking.

"There's a devil been in the Grosman house!" she was saying, in tones so fierce and passionate that Keene fairly wondered at the art of which she had been capable. "His name is Keene—Sheridan Keene!"

"The detective?"

"None other! Grosman knows all, and Watts is after us!" the girl continued. "Keene surely connects the robbery there with the attempt on the Couzons. God only knows what clue he found—but it's enough

that he found it! He's a devil! He's an artful devil!"

"Hold your noise!" commanded Dickson, sharply "Tell me all the facts. There yet may be a way out of the scrape without exposure. Tell me the facts."

"They are here," cried Louise. "I wrote them down, thinking I might not find you at the office, and I meant to slip the letter under the door. But I dared not! I dared not! That devil may know more even than I fear! This letter will explain——"

But Sheridan Keene then sprang into the room, and snatched the convicting letter from her extended hand.

"I'll take it, instead!" he cried, with terrible sternness. "Sit down in that chair!"

A roar of dismay broke from one of the men, and a shriek from the lips of the girl; but Keene whipped a revolver from his pocket, and thundered, sternly:

"You are under arrest, all of you! Sit still! I will shoot the first to move, and I'll shoot to kill!"

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

At eight o'clock that evening, Sheridan Keene, with the assistance of one of Chief Drury's Chelsea officers, brought his prisoners to Headquarters, and personally entered the private office of Chief Inspector Watts.

The latter looked up from his desk, on hearing the door opened.

"Well, Detective Keene?" he said, inquiringly.

"I have to report, chief, the arrest of the persons guilty of the Grosman robbery, and two of the men who waylaid the Couzons," said Keene, quietly.

Chief Watts smiled and rose to his feet.

"I expected it! You have done excellent work, Inspector Keene, and I congratulate you," he said, simply. "I will go with you and look them over."

And they passed out to the general office together.

"Oh, it was not such a difficult case after all, chief, with your assistance and suggestions," laughed Keene, as the two sat in com-

pany an hour later, the prisoners having been lodged in jail.

"Not difficult, perhaps," smiled Chief Watts. "Yet it required quite delicate work."

"In a way, yes," nodded Keene, knocking the ashes from his cigar. "Still, the case had features which, from the very start, directed one pretty accurately."

"That is true. The very nature of the robbery showed that some person in the Grosman house was acting in conjunction with parties outside."

"Curious that the affair of Mrs. Grosman should have turned up at just this time, however. For a short time, after observing her, I could by no means account for her conduct, and felt compelled to sift it to the bottom. Yet I clung to the first clue that we struck."

"You refer to the diamond cross."

"Yes, and the fact that the stones in that had not been disturbed. It indicated that some religious or superstitious person was guilty of the crime, and was deterred from taking the valuable gems in the cross because of its significance."

"No doubt of it."

"And when I saw the Fenster girl going out to church on Sunday, the first thing I noticed was the gilt cross in her prayer book. Egad, chief, it was like a cross-road signpost."

Chief Watts laughed in his genial fashion.

"Then, when I caught the girl listening to me, and watching my movements in Mrs. Grosman's room, and later using her pretty eyes to captivate me, I felt comparatively sure of my game. It seems she wasn't sure herself why I was there, and wouldn't take chances of earlier flight."

"So she now admits."

"Then," continued Sheridan Keene; "when I heard of the attempt to rob the Couzons, which, on the face of it, was the job of novices, I at once suspected that Louise had previously worked for the Couzons, and that their diamonds had been treated to a similar substitution, making it necessary to get hold of them, if possible, lest it should be learned that this girl had worked in both places."

"Yes, I see."

"It indicated that Louise had warned her

confederates of her suspicions of me, and that they had planned to effect the robbery. Well, we have two of them, and through them may secure the third."

"Surely!"

"Another feature was the evident distress of Mrs. Grosman, on learning of the attempt on the Couzons. Since learning about her brother, I now know she feared lest he was one of the parties guilty of attempting the Couzon robbery, he being here in town. That explains her agitation."

"Quite mixed, after all, I think."

"Well, chief, I didn't like to act hastily. I knew that, if I could frighten the Fenster girl sufficiently, I could drive her to seeking her confederates and warning them. Then I could bag them all."

"Very wisely done."

"So I went out to see Mrs. Couzon, and told her what I feared had happened to her jewels. She could describe the Fenster girl only in a general way, for she had been in her house under the name of Maxwell. I told Mrs. Couzon to have her jewels examined that morning, and, if she found I was right, to call in a conventional way, merely, upon Mrs. Grosman in the afternoon. Then I fixed things so Louise would be likely to answer the bell, and I knew that seeing Mrs. Couzon would give her the scare I desired."

"And it was well designed, too," said Chief Watts, with approval.

Keene laughed at his recollection of the incident.

"The poor girl nearly fainted," he continued. "She saw her former employer from the stairs. I helped her out, poor thing! Then I made sure she would be in hearing

while I squared myself with Mrs. Grosman and left the house. It wasn't a half-hour before out came Louise!"

"Well, it will be a long time before she comes out again, or her confederates," said Chief Watts, dryly. "She has confessed that she seized occasional opportunities to abstract the various ornaments, when the house safe was left open, and to have the substitutions effected by her accomplices. Well, they will do a long time for it, and they deserve it."

"Where is Barrister, or Barrows, at present, chief?"

"I have sent an officer for him. We will release him."

"I told Mrs. Grosman that you would help him along, in a way, if possible."

"So I will," said Chief Watts, heartily. "If there is one man in the world whom I most prefer to aid, when his intentions are honest, that man is an ex-convict! I will do everythink I can."

"And Mrs. Grosman's secret?"

"Pshaw!" and Chief Watts tossed his head disdainfully.

"Let Grosman continue blind, and nurse his pride to his heart's content," he added, bluntly. "He has nothing else to occupy his vacuous mind. Come, Keene, let's go and have some lunch!"

THE END.

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